March 1969

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE VOL. 135, NO. 3 

# South Korea

## SUCCESS STORY IN ASIA

Article and photographs by
HOWARD SOCHUREK

THE ASSASSIN ordered Peking duck. He was a small man named Kim Shin Jo, aged 26. We were sitting in the warm upstairs room of a Chinese restaurant in Seoul, Korea. Three other men sat at the table with us, armed intelligence officers who had escorted the prisoner to this unusual secret interview.

Kim was the only man taken alive from a band of 31 members of the North Korean 124th Guerrilla Unit, who had infiltrated into South Korea six months before. Their assignment was to behead the President of the Republic of Korea, Park Chung Hee.

"We were given the mission to kill Park on January 13, 1968, by Lt. Gen. Kim Chung Tae," Kim told me (page 331). He spoke in a straightforward manner. "Our guerrilla unit has eight bases with about 300 men at each base. We departed one such base on January 16 about one in the afternoon, and reached the Demilitarized Zone at seven in the evening on the following day. Our team traveled in a military bus, with an escort jeep and a supply truck. We crossed the border on foot that night, without incident."

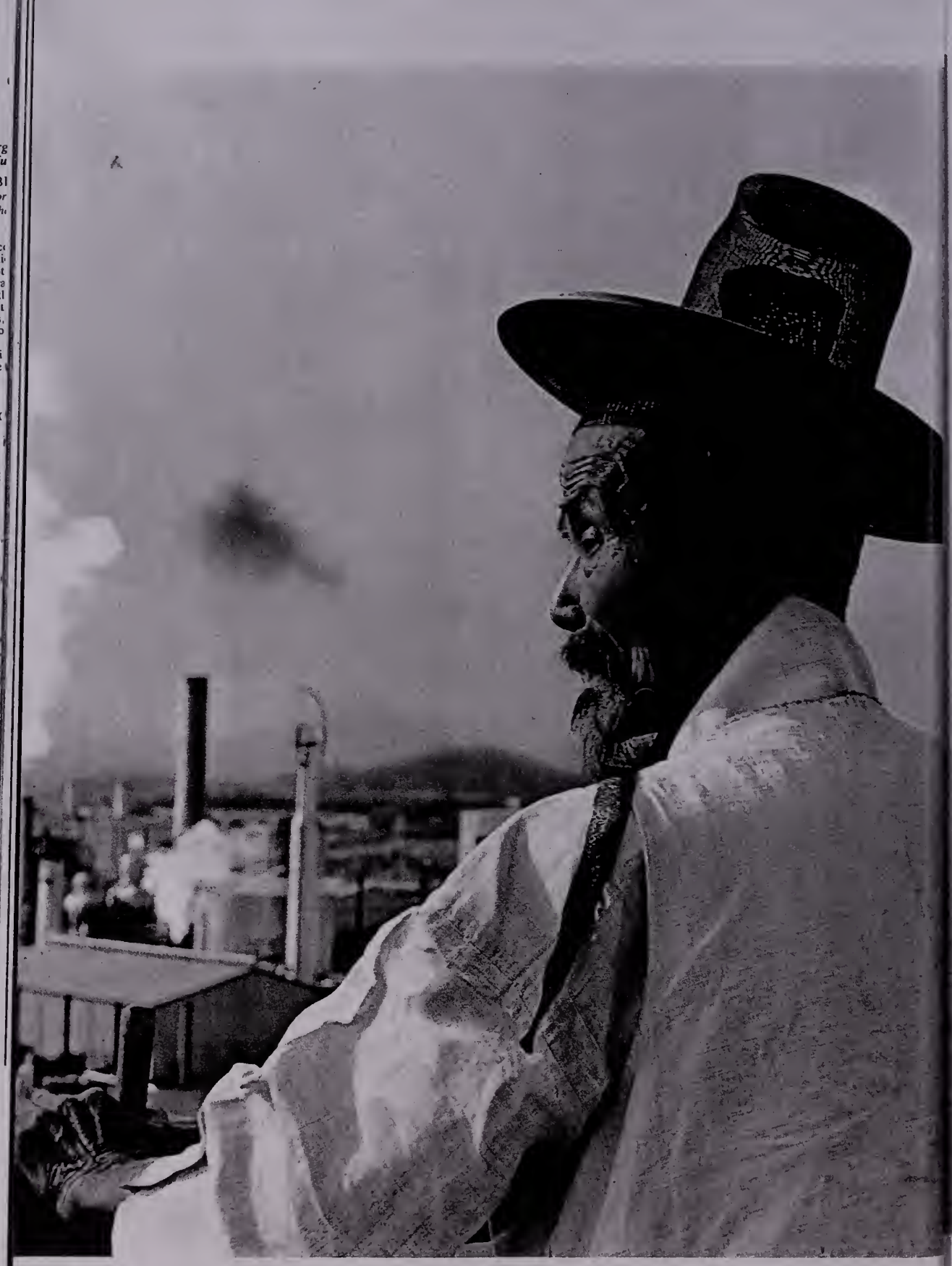
Keeping to lonely mountain trails, the assassination team made its way toward Seoul, 30 miles south. In the afternoon of the second day they surprised and captured four woodcutters. Some of the guerrillas wanted to kill them; others thought the simple woodsmen were too frightened to inform on them. They eventually let their captives go with a stern warning. It proved a fatal mistake. The woodcutters ran to a country police station, and Seoul security guards were alerted.

### Aim: To Stop Progress, Bring Chaos

Spotted on the outskirts of South Korea's capital city, the assassins threw hand grenades at two city buses, wounding the driver of one and killing three passengers. Then they charged down the hill toward the Blue House, residence of the President. Seoul police opened fire on them, and the guerrillas, abandoning their mission, began to scatter. Twenty-eight were shot down. Two escaped. Kim Shin Jo was captured.

---

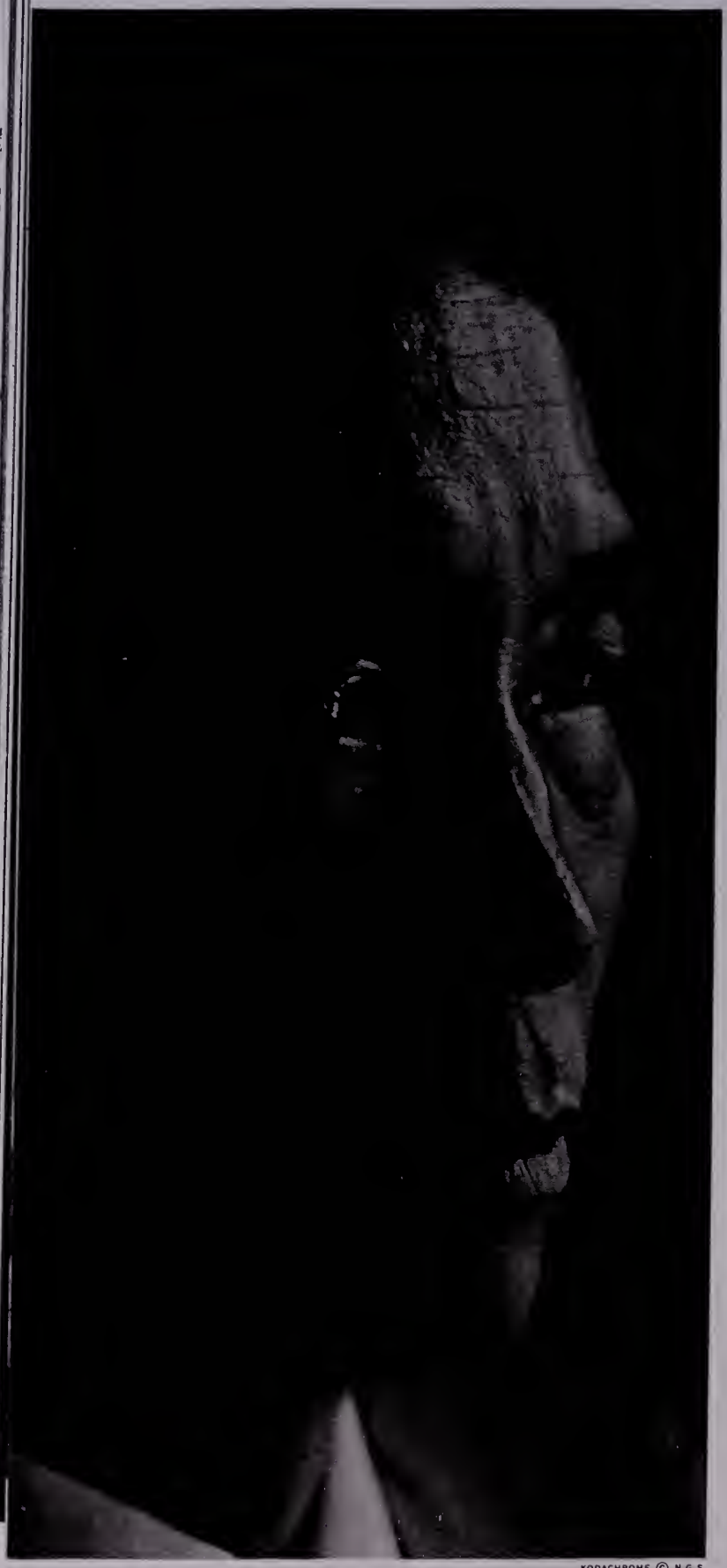
**The Author:** Four previous articles in NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, the most recent "Air Rescue Behind Enemy Lines" in September 1968, have carried the by-line of writer-photographer Howard Sochurek. In World War II he commanded a combat photographic team in Asia. In 1950, during the Korean War, he parachuted into North Korea at Sukchon, north of Pyongyang. Eighteen years later, he returned to Korea for the GEOGRAPHIC to report the dramatic recovery of this prospering but still-threatened "Land of Morning Calm."



**Technology's weird temples** awe a farmer wearing the traditional horsehair hat of a Korean elder. This modern refinery at Ulsan, processing crude oil from Kuwait, supplies all South Korea's needs; it sits in a huge industrial complex that will throb with nearly 100

EKTACHROME BY HOWARD SOCHUREK © N.G.S.

major installations by a target date of 1991. Throughout South Korea new mills and manufacturing plants, highways and housing projects quicken the tempo of life as the Indiana-size republic embarks on an industrial revolution reminiscent of Japan's in the early 1930's.



KODACHROME © N.G.S.

Now he sat across from me, in that incongruous social setting, telling me in matter-of-fact tones of the reason for the mission.

"We were told," he said, "that by eliminating Park, we would bring chaos to South Korea and inspire fear. We could stop the progress South Korea is making."

Kim had been instructed to destroy himself rather than be captured. He knew that his countrymen would now murder him if they could. I asked about his family—his mother, father, two sisters, and a brother.

"They are lucky if they are not executed by now," he said.

After the interview, Kim was led away. I walked the streets of modern Seoul back to my hotel, thinking about that doomed man, a hero-turned-traitor to the North, an assassin-turned-informer to the South. I thought, too, about what he had said. Communist North Korea's desperation is born of a simple fact—South Korea today, behind its forgotten battle front, presents a startling picture of success and progress.

I looked about me at the bright lights, the narrow streets crowded

**"A fire burns inside him,"** says the author about Park Chung Hee, President of the Republic of Korea. Working an 18-hour day, the 51-year-old former army general pores over production charts and reviews blueprints for highways and industrial plants; at a moment's notice he boards one of two stand-by helicopters to make on-the-spot inspections. Because of his personal identification with Korea's progress, President Park lives in constant danger of assassination by agents of hostile North Korea (page 331).

**Mirroring the intensity** of their President, 12th-graders study chemistry in Seoul. Their Kyung Gi High School boasts a student body with an average IQ of 130. Learning holds a cherished place in Korea, with a culture rich in arts and invention and a written history at least 2,000 years old.

with shoppers, the busy restaurants. The contrast between the city of today and the city I had seen 18 years before was overwhelming.

In 1950 I landed at Seoul's Kimpo airport in an aged C-54 Air Force transport. In that city of 1,700,000, the stench of death and the rubble of destruction were everywhere. Orphans, their clothes black from gutter living, pleaded for food. Live wires dangled from severed trolley cables. My jeep dodged gaping shell holes in the dusty streets. By 1953 the city had shrunk to a million.

### North Resents the South's Success

Today Seoul, with four million people, is a city transformed. As U. S. Ambassador William J. Porter told me, "All the energy that kept the Koreans from being destroyed over the course of centuries by their two great neighbors, Japan and China, is now being translated into achievement. They are literally building this city and land anew.

"There are two stories in Korea today," he concluded. "Remarkable economic growth—and increasing pressure from the North to try to prevent it."

How different was this note of optimism and progress, compared with so much of Asia. Yet the evidence for it was everywhere.

In Seoul I watched huge earthmoving tractors carving a new four-lane highway that will run the full 270 miles of the country from northwest to southeast, joining the capital with Pusan (page 315). An endless line of mixing trucks waited to pour concrete for a new 20-story office building, one of dozens that have revolutionized the skyline (next pages). Streetcar wires and rails were being removed in anticipation of a new all-bus transport system, planned for 1969. Right in the middle of the Han River, sand-suckers were building dikes for a new 700-acre island city.

Three busy bridges now span the Han. I became ensnarled on one in a huge traffic tie-up as workmen eased a 10-ton turbine across, bound for a new thermal power station.

Was this really the battered and blasted land I once had known?

"If you think Seoul is booming, take a look at Ulsan," Hamilton W. Meserve, head of the Seoul branch of New York's First National City Bank, told me. "The way things are going," he continued, "South Korea may one day pass Taiwan in per capita income."*

In a Korean Air Lines turboprop plane, I was soon bound for Ulsan with an interpreter from the Ministry of Culture and Information, Kim Kwang Sik—a brilliant linguist with a deep pride in his nation.

About a fifth of all Koreans are named Kim,

*See "Taiwan: The Watchful Dragon," by Helen and Frank Schreider, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, January 1969.

EKTACHROME © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

# Caged by hills, new Seoul grows skyward

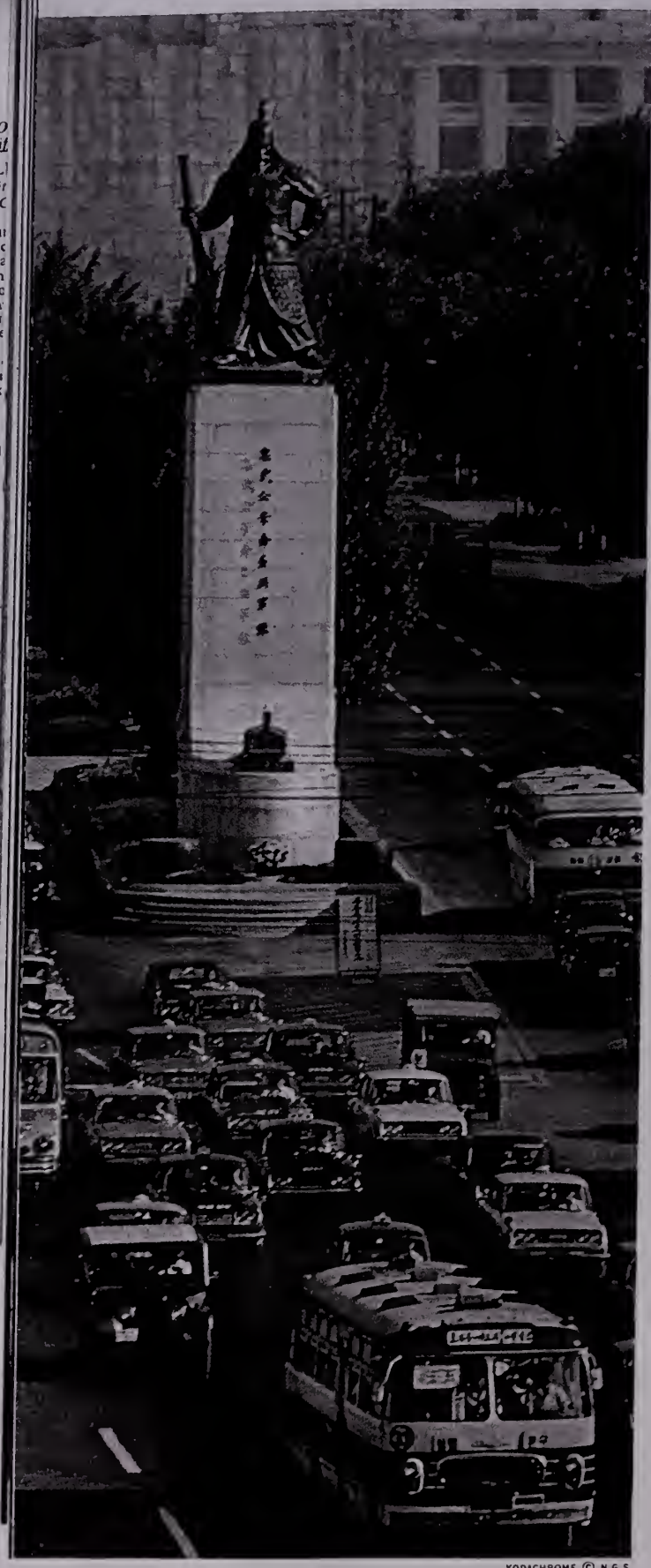
FOUR TIMES A BATTLEGROUND, Seoul emerged from the Korean War of 1950-53 a shattered shell, its million people facing famine. Today, transformed by native energy and foreign aid, the nation's capital, home to four million, presents a new and modern skyline.

In this view from Nam San (mountain), the National Capitol wears a dome at upper center. On a hillside at upper right stands the azure-roofed Blue House, the presidential mansion. Beside the curved façade of a new office building, left, scaffolding laces two unfinished hotels. Banks, insurance companies, and national headquarters of other businesses press shoulder to shoulder.

With 40 percent of the country's motor traffic clogging its streets, Seoul works to build a network of freeways. Above a laborer's handcart piled with sacks of rice (right), concrete pillars herald a 10-mile elevated speedway to Kimpo International Airport.

Yet despite its boom, Seoul lives in a shadow. Only 30 miles away lies the Demilitarized Zone, separating South and North Korea. Though a truce technically prevails, minor skirmishes across the line constantly threaten the uneasy peace.

KODACHROME AND EKTACHROME (BELOW) © N.G.S.



KODACHROME © N.G.S.

## Republic of Korea

PARTITIONING after World War II split the Korean peninsula into two worlds: the industrialized, Communist North—the Democratic People's Republic of Korea—and the agricultural South, today's fast-developing Republic of Korea (right). The name Korea—"high and lovely land"—derives from the medieval kingdom of Koryo. It aptly describes this verdant, mountain-ridged country.

**AREA:** 38,004 sq. mi. **POP.:** 30,410,000, more than twice that of North Korea. **RELIGION:** Buddhists, 3,970,000; Christians, 2,880,000; the remainder a melange of beliefs, including Confucianism. **ECONOMY:** Rice, barley, fishing. Large tungsten deposits. Food processing, cement, textiles. **CITIES:** Seoul, capital, 4,160,000; Pusan, port, 1,640,000.

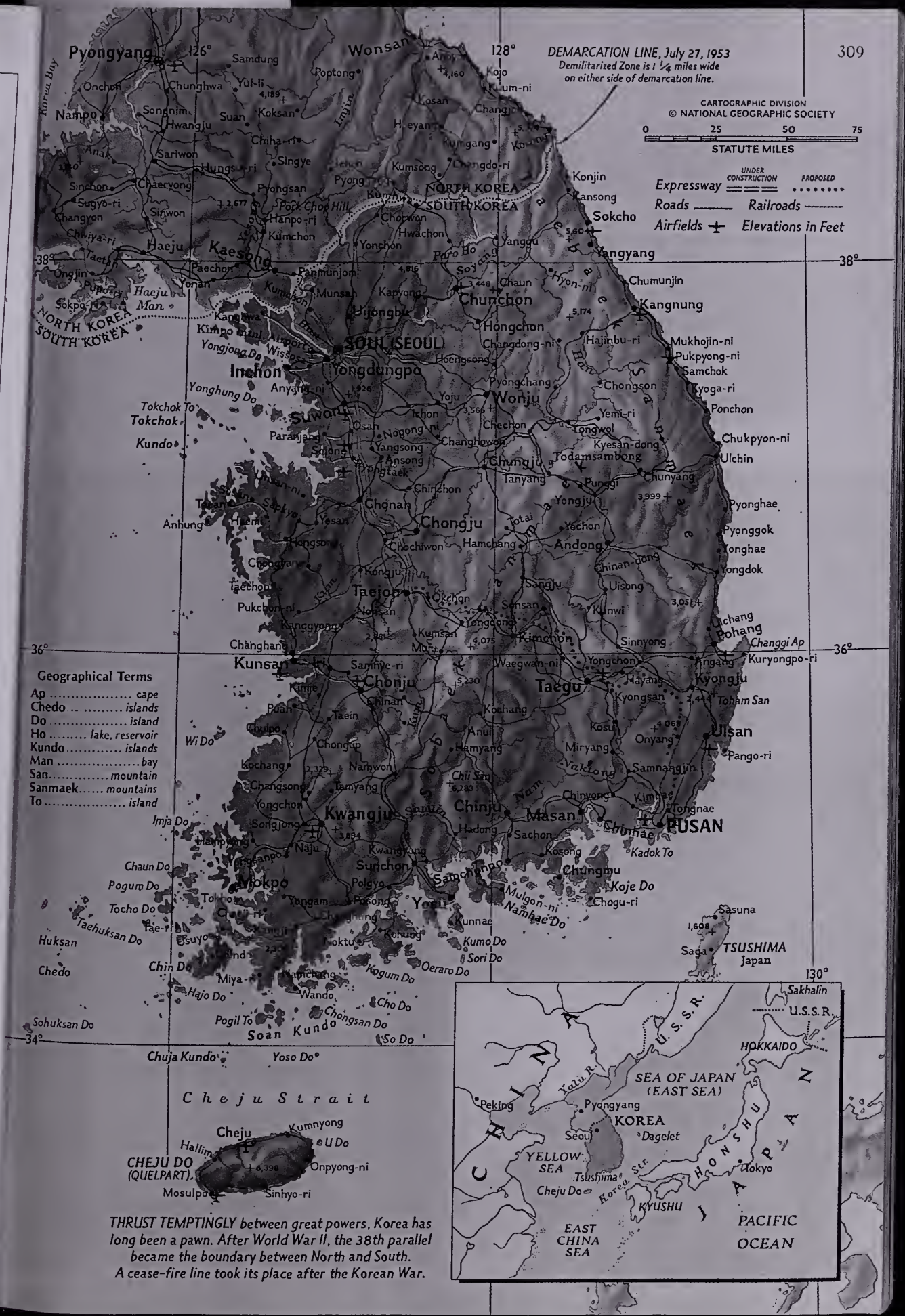
and most of the others seem to be named Lee, Choe, or Kang. The custom goes back many centuries to the time when family clans dominated Korean life. Koreans call themselves by what, to American ears, sounds like the reverse order—the clan, or "family," name first. Thus President Park, whom Westerners would call Chung Hee Park, is properly Park Chung Hee.

Below our wing the Korean peninsula—a lightning rod of political storms throughout Asian history—stretched southward between the glinting waters of the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan (maps, opposite). Mountain after mountain, many of them bare and brown, rumpled the landscape. Little larger than the State of Indiana, South Korea covers only 38,000 square miles, and scarcely a quarter of it is flat enough to farm.

Kim grew up in a village, knew the vicissitudes of war in his homeland, gained a hard-won education, and is now part of the driving spirit of a fast-modernizing nation of 30 million people.

"Our great resource is the human one," Kim said. "We must compete with more

**Heavy armor and mighty sword** identify Adm. Yi Sun Sin, whose statue overlooks Seoul's busy Sejong Avenue. Commanding the world's first ironclads, the national hero crushed a Japanese invasion fleet in 1592.




*THRUST TEMPTINGLY between great powers, Korea has long been a pawn. After World War II, the 38th parallel became the boundary between North and South. A cease-fire line took its place after the Korean War.*

**Hustle plus muscle** equals a gleaming polish for a Shinjin. Sixty such cars a day roll off the assembly line of the Inchon factory, which uses many Japanese Toyota parts. Though the autos cost the equivalent of $3,000—about five years' salary for one of these workmen—the plant already has a backlog of 7,000 orders. Lured by the market, Ford and Fiat will open assembly plants this year.

**With swatches of human hair,** a pigtailed girl fashions a wig. Worth $50 or more in U. S. shops, machine-sewn headpieces sell for only $9 at this factory in Seoul. Skilled but inexpensive labor —Korea's most abundant resource—attracts increasing numbers of foreign investors.

**Face to face with an inferno,** a sweating steelworker tends an open-hearth furnace at the Inchon Heavy Industry Corporation. Largest steel producer in the nation, the plant disgorges an annual 120,000 tons. Fed by iron ore found recently near Chaun, Korean steel production soars.

plus muscle
gleaming polish
injin. Sixty such
ay roll off the as-
ne of the Inchon
vhich uses many
Toyota parts.
he autos cost the
t of $3,000—
years' salary for
iese workmen—
already has a
f 7,000 orders.
he market, Ford
vill open assem-
this year.

highly developed nations by using our great reservoir of industrious people."

Ulsan came as a shock to me. An entirely new industrial complex was laid out near the old city in 1962. Two billion dollars—much of it investment, both public and private, from the United States, Japan, and West Germany—went into a five-year plan. Kim Kwang Sik and I drove out from old Ulsan to see the result.

Huge industrial structures sprawled across the hills and valleys rolling toward the vast new port complex. Here ten completed plants refined oil (pages 302-3), made fertilizer, rayon, nylon, and asphalt, produced caustic soda (a basic ingredient in soap, rayon, and paper), and manufactured chemicals. An ambitious new five-year plan, to cost six billion dollars, is moving Ulsan closer to its goal of 96 industrial plants by 1991.

"What we are looking at," said Kim, "is the beginning of South Korea's Pittsburgh, its Essen, its Osaka."

### Dried Squid and Fermented Cabbage

Foreign investors have had cause to be happy with their gamble on South Korea's future. One American oil company took a $5,000,000 share of Ulsan's $20,000,000 refinery in 1964 and has since, in four years, recovered twice its investment.

We went on to Pusan, South Korea's second largest city and largest port. My room at the year-old eight-story Keukdong Hotel looked





out onto the Sea of Japan, which Koreans call the East Sea. Japan lies only 120 miles southeast (inset map, page 309).

A fresh ocean breeze blew in. Below, clean white beaches welcomed crowds enjoying the August holiday season (pages 316-17). Kim and I joined them, stopping in a small restaurant for a favorite Korean snack—dried squid and beer. Others were enjoying the national dish, *kimchi,* made chiefly of fermented, highly spiced Chinese cabbage.

Relative wealth, the relaxation of a hard-working middle class taking time out from years of hardship and war, a feeling of well-being—these impressions drifted through my mind as I strolled the beach near Pusan. I thought, too, that in the United States today half the population is under 25—and thus half my countrymen have only the dimmest memory, if any at all, of the beachhead at Pusan in the dark days of the summer of 1950.

Korea was divided at the 38th parallel after World War II. The nine million people of the industrialized North, occupied by the Russian Army, quickly fell under Communist domination. The South, with 19 million—chiefly farmers and fishermen—was administered by the United States Army until 1948, when the Republic of Korea was formed.* Syngman Rhee, who headed a provisional government in the United States, returned to Korea and was elected president.

On June 25, 1950, the North Korean premier, Kim Il Sung, sent armor and infantry

*See "With the U. S. Army in Korea," by Lt. Gen. John R. Hodge, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, June 1947.



dimmest
hhead at
r of 1950.
parallel
n people
d by the
mmunist
nillion—
adminis-
til 1948,
formed.*
visional
urned to

an pre-
infantry
Gen. John

across the lightly defended parallel. It was an act of premeditated and unprovoked aggression. While the United Nations met, United States military personnel joined South Korean troops in a futile attempt to stem the advance. Desk clerks and file clerks grabbed unfamiliar carbines and went to the front.

Seoul fell after only three days. The North Korean columns streamed across the peninsula, pushing the South Korean Army and the U. S. 24th Infantry Division before them toward the Sea of Japan. Finally, only a congested beachhead around Pusan remained, and there the defenders hung on grimly.

Now the waves near Pusan lapped peacefully on the beach. The lights of fishing boats bobbed toward the horizon, on their way to a night of squid fishing.

That way, too, had gone the ships that carried an assault force commanded by Gen. Douglas MacArthur in September 1950. In a brilliant tactical stroke, he moved a United Nations force around the entire Korean peninsula and landed at Inchon, 20 miles west of Seoul and deep behind the Communist lines ringing Pusan.

Seizing the initiative, MacArthur's troops quickly recaptured Seoul. The enemy ring around Pusan broke and reeled backward. The U.N. army—men of 16 nations in addition to the South Koreans—swept northward, into and beyond the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, as far as the Yalu River, the boundary between Korea and Red China.

Hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops then poured into the war, and it continued to rage for three long years. The bitter hill-to-hill struggle cost an estimated one million lives. In 1953 came military stalemate and an armistice. A no man's land—the Demilitarized Zone, or DMZ—was drawn between the positions of the armies, roughly at the same parallel that divided the country before the North Korean invasion. It has been so divided ever since.

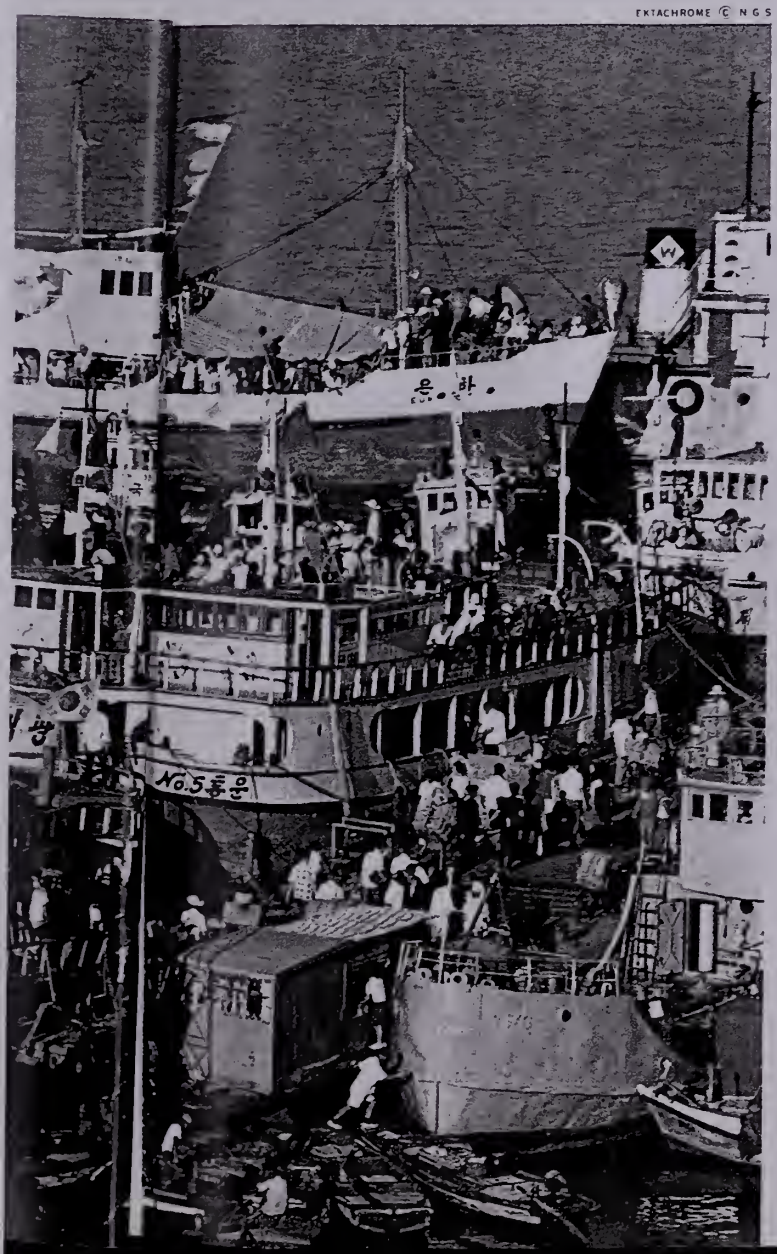
### East-West Partnership Pays Off

Korea's present prosperity began with a marriage of American capital and Korean energy. Since 1953 the United States Government has granted almost four billion dollars in economic assistance, in addition to military aid. In recent years, the trend has been toward loans for electric power, water supplies, credit institutions, and industries.

At the end of World War II, when the long Japanese occupation of Korea ended, the port of Pusan counted 280,000 people. Today more than 1,600,000 crowd the city.

Housing and water problems have been severe. Unemployment was running at about 8 percent last summer, but the city was spending 65 percent of a $40,000,000 annual budget on new housing and resettlement.

A clutter of shanties covers the surrounding hillsides, while the downtown area is dusty, noisy, and congested. A bus assembly plant and shipyards and docks that handle




**Seagoing buses** at Inchon load and unload rush-hour passengers. The ferries plow the Yellow Sea, carrying workers to and from offshore islands. Currents generated by Inchon's turbulent 30-foot tides have sometimes capsized overloaded craft.

more than six million tons of freight a year make Pusan a bustling, energetic place. But some things, like fried ants, still remind visitors of older ways of life.

The ants—big red ones collected in the surrounding hills—scramble around in the glass jars of street merchants. The more adventurous among Pusan's gourmets still buy them at 30 cents a handful, wrapped in newspapers, and carry them home alive. Sauteed lightly, they are considered a delicacy.

### Confident Land Under Constant Menace

All of Korea's progress has not been financed by government grants. Private money has come as well. I found one of the best examples at the Tong Myung Timber Company, a plywood manufacturing firm at Pusan. Mr. Lim Myun Jae, production director, told me the story as we watched huge blades peel pine trees down to thin sheets of wood, much as a knife peels an apple skin. Several sheets glued together make plywood.

"A vice president of the Evans Products Company of Portland, Oregon, came to Korea in 1961," Lim Myun Jae said. "He met our president, Mr. Kang Suk Chin, and they decided that timber from the Philippines and from northern Borneo could be made into plywood with Korean skilled labor and sold at a profit in the United States. Now, seven years later, we provide jobs for 6,000 people and are producing $25,000,000 worth of plywood a year. We believe it will reach $50,000,000 by 1970. We have grown together, because we have confidence in one another."

I looked out across the small bay near the plant to the United Nations Memorial Cemetery, with its precise ranks of grave markers bearing the symbols of many religions and nationalities (page 335).

"Are you concerned about another invasion from the North?" I found myself asking.

"In this plant," Mr. Lim replied, "we have 13 militia companies, equipped to fight. We will defend our plant."

Everywhere I traveled, I found South Koreans conscious of the threat from the North. The Communist regime of Premier Kim Il Sung keeps constant pressure on South Korea through infiltration and subversion.

One night, after returning to Seoul, Kim and I tuned in to Radio Pyongyang, transmitting from the capital city of North Korea. Precisely at midnight a coarse feminine voice announced in Korean: "I'm going to begin my broadcast. Please find paragraph one of chapter eight."

She was referring to the code book used by North Korean agents who had made their way into the South. Two minutes of blaring martial music followed. The choice of tune also gives information to the agents.

The voice came on again and, in a deliberate manner, announced, "Eight . . . five . . . two . . . four . . . one. . . ." Then came a break of three or four seconds, and again a series of five digits. After three or four such groups, she repeated all the digits.

It felt strange to think that maybe in the same hotel, in the next room, or next house, an agent might be listening to instructions for a new assassination attempt. The slow recitation of numbers continued for 10 minutes. Then came another military march, followed again by the five-digit code.

### Pawn of Powerful Neighbors

As I listened, I thought about Korea's sad history: invasion, threat of invasion, infiltration, continuous vigilance to preserve hard-won independence.

The first known peoples to find Korea migrated south from the forests of Siberia and the plains of Manchuria. They were nomadic hunters and gatherers thought by scholars to be a branch of the Tungus, a Mongol people. Those who reached the southern part of the long tongue of land stretching between the seas were called the Han.

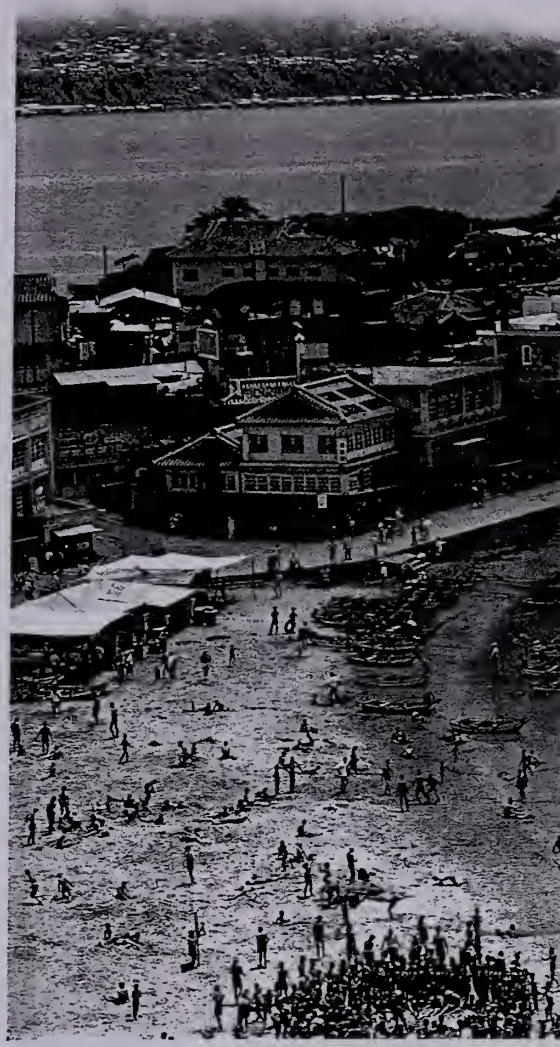
They found rich soil on the coastal plains and in the river valleys and became an agricultural people divided into three main tribes, the Mahan, the Chinhan, and the Pyonhan. Their northern cousins, the Koguryo, remained for a time hunters of deer and bear and other animals that inhabited the cold, forested mountains of the north.

An ancient name for Korea, Choson, means "land of morning calm"—a state of beatitude

**Tying a nation together,** a four-lane expressway-in-the-making slashes past a village 20 miles south of the capital. A favorite project of President Park, the 270-mile-long artery connecting Seoul and Pusan will cost South Korea $122,000,000, making it the greatest single effort of the striving land. When completed in 1970, it will transform the countryside, putting village labor and produce within reach of big-city markets.

EKTACHROME © N.G.S

**The shade that sells:** Bright umbrellas on Haeundae Beach near Pusan advertise Korean-made wares. The seaside resort also offers its visitors baths in hot springs.



**Blue-water playground** of Pusan, Songdo Beach swarms with school children in August; January is their other vacation month. Huddle in the foreground plots a game of leapfrog.

seldom achieved in the turbulent centuries that followed. For, unknown to these early Koreans, they occupied a strategic region amid what were to become great and ambitious powers—China, Russia, and Japan.

The Han tribes of the south established competing kingdoms called Silla and Paekche. The Koguryo of the north established a third kingdom, bearing their tribal name.

For seven centuries the three kingdoms of Choson fought each other and outside invaders, until Silla prevailed and unified the country in 668. Then came a time of glory. The arts flourished, inspired largely by the state religion of Buddhism. Poets sang "songs of the east"—that is, native lyrics rather than imitations of either Chinese or Japanese styles.

### Invasions Sweep Away Kingdoms

The kingdom of Silla in 935 gave way to a rebellious chief, Wanggon, who founded the kingdom of Koryo—from which the modern name Korea derives. But the destiny of this crossroad of conquerors was fixed. Less than a century later, Manchurian tribes came down upon Koryo. They were followed by Mongol

KODACHROMES © N.G.S.

Crowding a finger of land inside the city limits, Songdo offers hotel accommodations for 3,000 sun-seekers. Beyond the fog-shrouded peninsula in the background lies the huge natural harbor that makes Pusan the nation's chief port. In 1950, during the Korean War, Allied forces retreated southward to this city, here making a last desperate—and successful—stand.

hordes, sweeping through the northern valleys to the fields of the south. The Koryo king submitted, and his successors accepted Mongol wives. Kublai Khan attempted two invasions of Japan from Korean ports—a lesson in geography the Japanese never forgot.

In 1392, a great Korean appeared in the figure of Gen. Yi Song Gye. He overthrew the Mongol-dominated Koryo king and ascended the throne himself. The dynasty which bears his name was to rule until 1910. The land was again named Choson (outsiders called it Chosen), with its capital at Seoul. As before under the Silla kingdom, a renaissance of Korean culture came with independence. A Yi king, Sejong, devised a near-perfect phonetic alphabet called *hangul,* used today. Movable metal type was in use here in 1403, half a century before Gutenberg printed his Bible.

During a dark era known as the "fifty bloody years," Korea suffered two more invasions. The troops of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, shogun of Japan, attempted to seize the kingdom in 1592 but finally withdrew after seven years of conflict. A Korean hero, Adm. Yi Sun Sin (page 308), fought and won a famous

naval engagement using history's first ironclad ships, shaped like turtles.

No sooner had the Japanese withdrawn than the Manchus invaded from the north, and Korea's Yi kings became more or less willing vassals of the Manchu dynasty in China. In time, the country's doors were sealed against the world, which henceforth knew the "Hermit Kingdom" chiefly from tales brought back by shipwrecked sailors.

Still more wars were to be waged over Korea. In 1894 Japan fought against China for control of the peninsula. Japan, the victor, agreed to guarantee Korean independence. Its failure to do so, among other reasons, led to the intervention of Russia in the struggle for Korea. The Russo-Japanese War ended in 1905 with complete Japanese occupation of the country and its subsequent annexation, which lasted until after World War II.

Thus, throughout most of its history, Korea has been dominated either by China or by Japan, or has been a battleground. With the exception of its brief days of independent glory under the Silla kings, and later the Yi dynasty kings, Korea has been a nation with a foreign yoke on its neck.

Now the voice of yet another threat—the calm, measured tones of Radio Pyongyang, reciting coded instructions to spies—filled my hotel room. At 1 a.m. the station signed off and Kim left, but I sat for a long time listening to the night sounds of the city.

### Expatriates Gather at the Seoul Club

Few foreigners have survived much of modern Korea's turbulent history, but I found one man who had. I tracked him down at the Seoul Club, social headquarters of foreign expatriates in Korea. The building, a turn-of-the-century red-brick residence with queer gables and towers, is reached through a narrow alleyway. The manager, a Basque named José Serra, provided me with guest card No. 6889. A few moments later, No. 6889 met No. 2, a graying Englishman, short and stout.

"Cheesman," he said, extending his hand, "Squadron Leader, Burma, 1944."

W. Gifford Cheesman—known inevitably as "Cheesey"—came to Korea in 1931 as a young mining engineer. Gold brought him, and gold has kept him there.

"I worked at a gold mine at the village of Taeyudong, in what is now North Korea. Then the Japanese rulers started arresting foreigners. That was in September 1939, when Hitler moved on Poland. I escaped from Dairen, Manchuria, just ahead of a prison camp."

"Why did you come back?" I asked him.

"My father had an interest in a gold mine on Yongjong, an island off Inchon. I wanted to work it. Profits in the 1930's had been running at 15 and 20 percent. I have since spent everything trying to reopen the mine."

EKTACHROME (BELOW) AND KODACHROME © N.G.S.

**Tuned in to teaching machines,** electronics-age students study a taped English lesson in Seoul's Kyung Gi Middle (junior high) School. Faced with a staggering illiteracy problem after World War II, South Korea mounted an educational effort that has now cut the rate to 10 percent.

**Bare and beaming,** boys take a break from swimming off the rocky island of Cheju, 50 miles south of the mainland. Soon they may have to earn their living aboard some of the island's countless fishing craft. Wind-swept Cheju served as a steppingstone for the Japanese in their 1931 invasion of Manchuria.

Abandonment during World War II had rusted the machinery and filled in some of the shafts. Muck had come in on high tides near Inchon. Cheesey employed special equipment to clear the mine. Then the North Koreans invaded the South. Now Cheesey, in keeping with the tradition of his adopted homeland, is starting all over again.

"Viewing things in a perspective of 37 years," he said, "I say things have never been so good as they are right now. I see more opportunity here now than ever before."

I wondered what opportunity meant to both the high and the low. I sought out, first, the richest man in modern Korea—Lee Byung Chull, or B. C. Lee. He is the chairman of a holding company, the Samsung Moolsan Co., Ltd., which includes more than a dozen major manufacturing enterprises. He also owns one of the 35 major daily newspapers and one of the two television networks that serve the country, which in two decades has become 90 percent literate.

Mr. Lee received me in his mahogany-paneled fifth-floor office in a newly built air-conditioned building in downtown Seoul. We sat at a huge, polished ebony table.

I asked him about the concentration of industry in the hands of a few people in Korea. Puffing on a cigar, he answered: "There certainly exists such a trend, but this is only a part of the story. You see, government steps in when growth becomes too great. Government control is necessary in the field of economic planning, but I do not feel there is excessive control. Government and industry are like husband and wife; President Park relies on industry for development."

"Who is responsible for the economic growth of modern Korea?" I asked.

KODACHROME AND EKTACHROME (RIGHT) BY HOWARD SOCHUREK © N.G.S.

**Up for air,** abalone diver Koh Doo Sim suspends her catch of meaty mollusks from a float. Women of Cheju Island can descend to depths of 45 feet and hold their breath for more than 2½ minutes.

**Hung out like family wash,** squid dry on lines at Sokcho. Fishermen of the east-coast port catch thousands of tons of this Korean favorite a year. Until the 1950-53 war shifted boundaries, Sokcho belonged to the North.

"President Park," Mr. Lee replied without hesitation. "He has built up the people's confidence in themselves. We feel we can stand on our own feet. He has a great obsession for modernization of the country. If one day our children ask what we have done for our country, we can proudly say we worked for its modernization."

### Prices Soar Between Seoul and States

It was, in fact, a child who completed my economics lesson. She was a thin girl from a country village who worked in a wig-making factory and lived in a nearby dormitory with dozens of similar companions. The thought crossed my mind that she might have made one of the wigs I had seen on fashionable women at New York social affairs.

The factory is in a new building on the outskirts of Seoul. Human hair arrives from India and Indonesia in large cloth bags. The girls sit on the floor to sort it for length and texture, then dye, wash, and comb it. The more expensive wigs are hand-sewn onto cloth caps, an operation that might take 30 hours. Most are machine-stitched (page 310). The wig one can buy at the factory for as little as $9 costs $50 and up in the United States.

It is the kind of product—inexpensive materials worked by inexpensive hand labor and sold at high prices—that has been a boon to the Korean economy. About $100,000 worth of wigs were exported in 1964. Four years later the trade had skyrocketed to $28,000,000, almost all to the United States.

I stopped and chatted with one girl. She had been sent to town from her village only a short time before. Her father was a fisherman. I asked her how she liked her new life and her job, in which she earned 9,000 won,



or $33 a month. A small, sad tear trickled down her cheek.

In time, I knew, she would grow out of her homesickness. In the village, her marriage would almost certainly be arranged for her, and she would move into the house of her mother-in-law—not always a happy situation. In the city, she might have an opportunity to find her own mate.

I later asked my friend Kim about the role of women in Korean society.

"Women have a different place here," he said. "When a man calls his wife, it is never by name. He says, *'Yobo.'*"

"How does that translate?"

EKTACHROMES © N.G.S.

**Echo from the past:** A chimer plays a *pyenchong,* a battery of 16 bronze bells of different tones first used in the 12th century. Dressed as an early court musician, he performs at the National Classical Music Institute.

**Splendid as a peacock,** a folk dancer entertains American visitors at Seoul's Korea House. Though classical steps yield to those from the West in the cities, villagers cling to folk dances, usually performed separately by men or women. Korea House, a government-run hospitality center, presents a capsule view of the nation's culture through displays of its arts and foods.

"Something like, 'Hey, you.'"

"Suppose the arranged marriage doesn't work out; suppose they don't like each other?"

"It would be a disgrace to desert the husband. No, the bride becomes part of the new family and may never return to her own."

I thought about the girl in the wig factory. Would she one day share Mr. Lee's pride in the modernization of the country, or would she think that the old ways were still the best?

### Korean Prince, American Citizen

In search of the old traditions, I visited the youngest living descendant of Korea's royal family (page 329). Yi Kyu, aged 37, lives in Changdok Palace, at the foot of one of the hills ringing Seoul, where his uncle and his grandfather lived and ruled.

One Sunday he welcomed me at the palace gate. "Come in," he said. "It's always nice to see a fellow American."

I discovered that Prince Yi, an American citizen, was educated in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A former designer for the noted New York architect I. M. Pei, Kyu, as he prefers to be addressed, married a Pennsylvania girl, the former Julia Mullock.

In 1963 Kyu's ailing father returned to Korea after many years of seclusion in Japan. His illness became critical, and his only son turned his back on a successful and affluent life in New York and returned to Korea—an act that emphasized to me the burden of tradition and history that the eldest son of every Korean family must bear.

"My interest now is in the preservation of Korea's great cultural monuments," Kyu said. "I had to complain to the government last week about a highway, being built around Seoul, that was cutting right through a century-old shrine that ought to be preserved."

Kyu took me on a tour of his palace, an experience I'll not soon forget.

We visited the Chong Myo, the ancestral shrine on the palace grounds, which the Prince thinks is architecturally the most important building in the country. The original building dates from 1395; rebuilt in 1870, it contains ceremonial rooms honoring 49 Yi dynasty kings and queens.

At the back of this long, low building was one solid wall of brick, almost 200 feet long. It bore no load, had no function other than an esthetic one. It symbolized, according to Yi Kyu, the continuity of the dynasty.

Prince Yi finished his tour by showing me his private garden. It was on a lovely hillside

behind a single-storied, moss-covered, tile-roofed house whose wooden columns were streaked with white salt. Before building with wood, Koreans soak it in salt water to preserve it.

Kyu pointed out that four seasons had been built into the garden. For winter, the evergreen; for spring, the azalea and the blossoming cherry; for summer, water lilies; and for fall, the persimmon. Here and there a piece of upright volcanic stone, some six feet in height, jutted from soft beds of clover moss.

I was reminded of a famous Korean poem, the "Song of Five Friends," written by Yun Son Do in the 17th century:

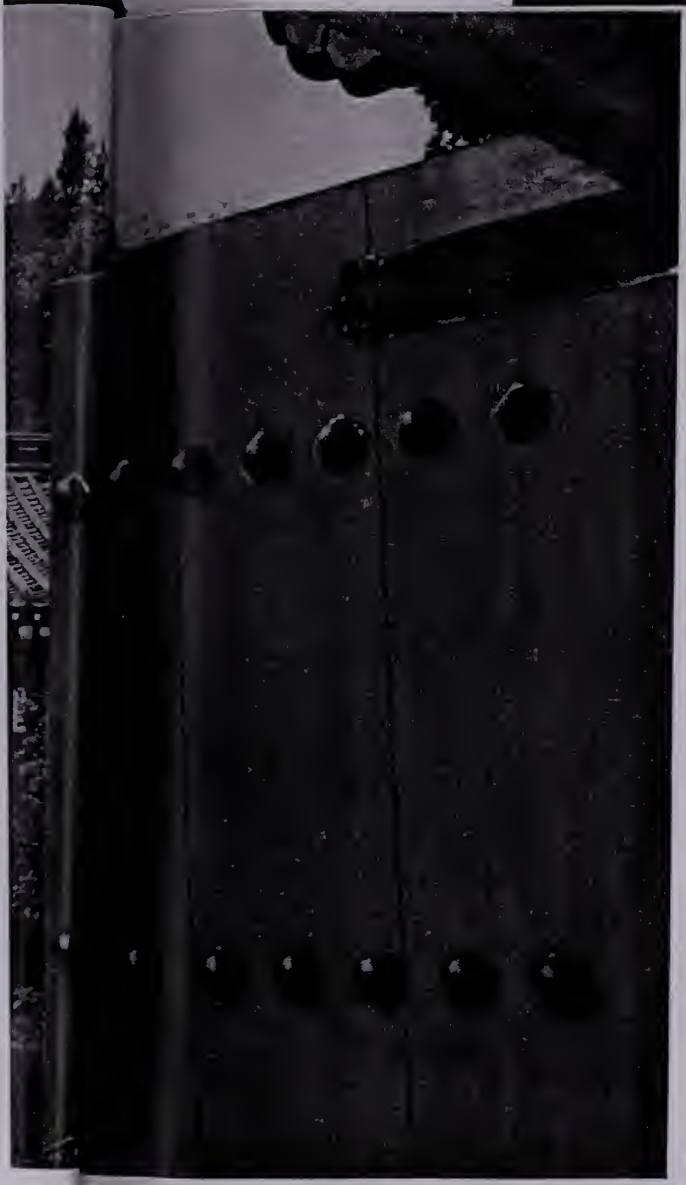
*How many friends have I? Count them:*
*Water and stone, pine and bamboo—*
*The rising moon on the east mountain,*
*Welcome, it too is my friend.*
*What need is there, I say,*
*To have more friends than five?*

As I left Prince Yi that Sunday in late summer, he remarked, "This palace and the Chong Myo are the national treasures of the Yi dynasty. Remember, Seoul in a way is an old village, and I hope this village feeling stays. When the city loses this feeling, the city ceases to exist."

### Hot War Burns Along the DMZ

As it has been at so many times in its history, the "old village" of Korea is again under attack. A deadly cat-and-mouse war continues along the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas (map, page 309).

Early one Monday morning I loaded my cameras and myself aboard a big olive-drab army bus that lumbers north from Seoul. On the South Korean side of the DMZ, which runs for 151 miles from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea, is a well-built barrier fence, bordered in depth by defensive mine fields. The DMZ is two and a half miles wide. A road



**Elite of entertainers,** *kisaeng* girls stroll in the garden of graceful Sun Wun Gak, or Angel Cloud House, in Seoul. In kisaeng houses across the land, highly trained women such as Miss Han Mi Ja (above) entertain diners with conversation, singing, and poetry.

**Gay jumping jacks,** schoolgirls bedecked in New Year's costumes improvise a seesaw; a good bounce may lift them three feet in this traditional holiday game. Pagoda-roofed pavilion shelters the more sedate in this public park in Suwon.

KODACHROME BY H. EDWARD KIM; EKTACHROMES (UPPER) BY HOWARD SOCHUREK © N.G.S.

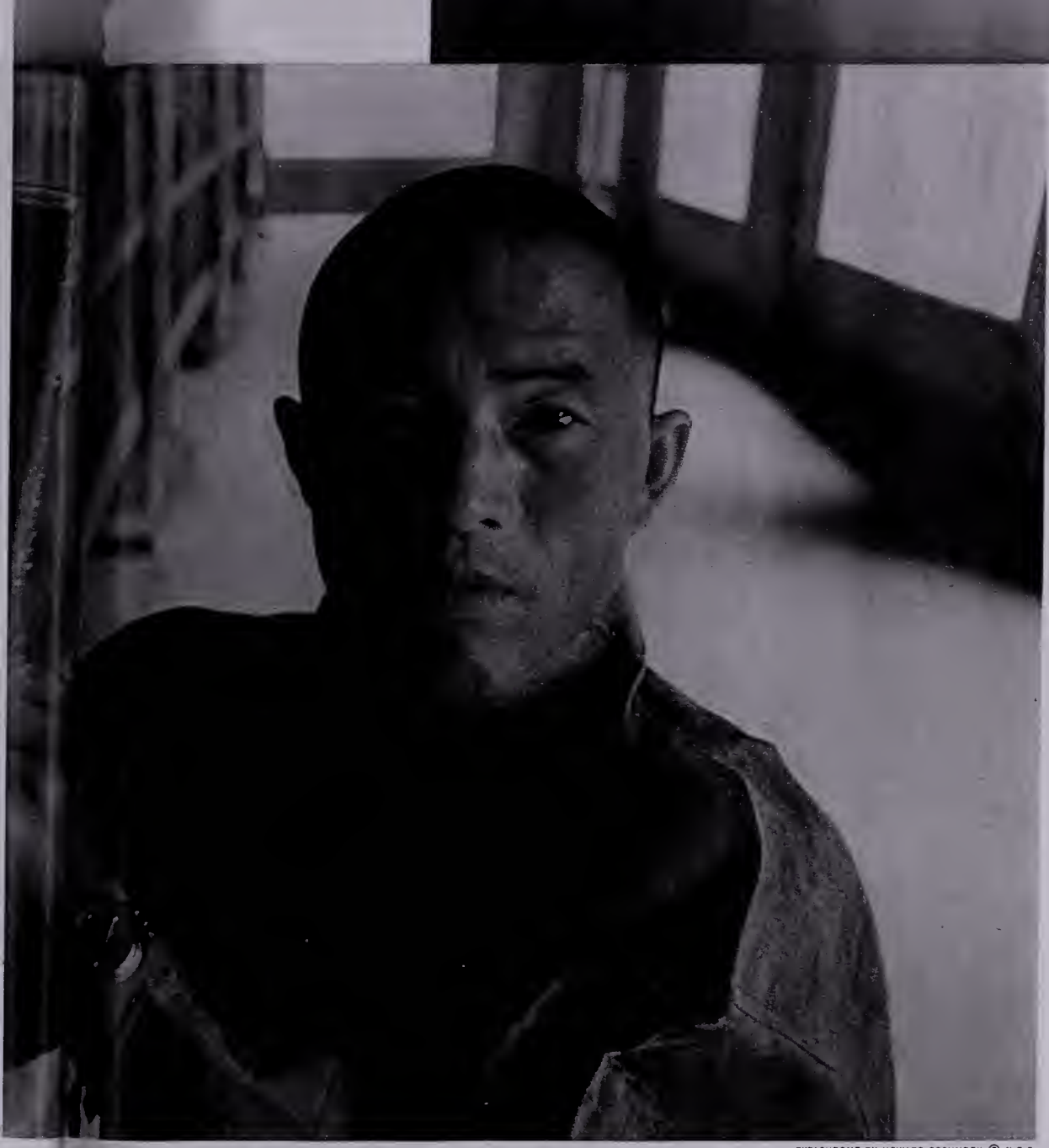
**Guardian of a national treasure**, a Buddhist monk at Hae In temple near Taegu displays one of 81,258 wooden printing blocks hand-carved in the 13th century. The blocks record Buddhist scripture in Chinese characters, read-

led us to the truce camp near the village of Panmunjom, the only point of contact between the North Koreans and the free-world forces. Here were held the meetings between the U.N. chief negotiator, Maj. Gen. Gilbert H. Woodward, who later won release of the *Pueblo* crew, and the Communist, Maj. Gen. Pak Chung Kuk.

When I arrived, the 275th meeting of the Military Armistice Commission was about to begin. Open windows at each end of a long, corrugated-iron barracks provide an observation place for journalists, both from the Communist countries and from the free world.

Looking in, I saw General Woodward seated at a felt-topped table. Opposite and facing him barely three feet away was General Pak, an expressionless propagandist for the Communist side. The line separating North and South Korea runs through the center of the conference table (page 334).

Across this table, the United Nations Command had up to then charged the North Koreans with 6,100 violations of the 1953 cease-fire agreements. The North Koreans had admitted to two in 1953. They, in turn, had charged the U.N.C. with 54,399 violations, of which 92 were admitted.



EKTACHROME BY HOWARD SOCHUREK © N.G.S.

ing from the top down and from right to left. Koreans were printing with movable metal type as early as A.D. 1403—half a century before Johann Gutenberg used the same technique to print his famous Bible in Mainz, Germany.

I heard General Woodward state: "I would like to cite the following incidents of premeditated violence that indicate a continuation of armed violence in deliberate violation of the armistice agreement."

He then documented 26 incidents that had taken place in the previous 10 days. All involved North Korean infiltrators invading the territory of South Korea. In these incidents, 20 Communists had been killed. The number of those who successfully infiltrated and moved on south was, of course, unknown.

General Woodward ended his report by saying, "I demand that those responsible be punished, and that a full report be made to this commission."

After translation of General Woodward's statement into Korean and then Chinese, for the benefit of the two Chinese liaison officers present, General Pak made his reply:

"It is you who are provoking a new war. You have fired 106,000 bullets into our lines. The results of your aggression will be the flames of total war. If you want to avoid the fate of dead Kennedy, stop making political invectives and accusations at this table."

At one point there was a stand-off. Neither side talked for nearly 10 minutes.

Then the action outside the conference chamber got hotter than that inside. North Korean military photographers make it a point to document any new faces that appear in Panmunjom. A new face, that of Lt. Col. Charles Spalding of Middlebury, Vermont, was present. Colonel Spalding commands the U. S. Army advance camp near the DMZ. As he was being photographed by the Communist military photographer, a South Korean newspaperman chose to photograph the event. A husky North Korean soldier gave the newsman a healthy push, and a scuffle ensued. It was quickly broken up by security police.

One of the oldest hands at the talks is Col. John P. Lucas of Greer, Arizona. He was also present at secret negotiations in Panmunjom that first attempted release of the crew of the U. S. Navy electronic intelligence ship *Pueblo,* which was seized by North Korean boarders off Wonsan, North Korea, on January 23, 1968.

The day after my visit to Panmunjom, I asked Colonel Lucas why the number of incidents of infiltration and combat is increasing.

He said, "One of their motives is to goad us into reacting or overreacting."

Remarking on the lack of diplomacy at the meeting, I asked Colonel Lucas if this was common. "Oh yes," he answered. "General Pak's favorite expression is, 'You will all be dead in the streets like the Kennedys.' He often uses the words liar, snake, and rat to berate his U. S. counterpart.

"Another motive," continued Colonel Lucas, "is propaganda. We know this because Radio Pyongyang often puts out General Pak's statements before he makes them at Panmunjom. Meaningful discussions don't exist here. The real problem is that a provocation may produce a situation that could get completely out of hand."

Colonel Lucas ended our conversation by saying: "It's been hard for me to realize after all these years of dealing in truth that I am now in a job where there is no truth. Do you know that while we were talking at Panmunjom yesterday, the Communists ambushed

**Glory of an epoch,** this crown of gold came from a grave at Kyongju, ancient capital of the Silla dynasty. A Silla king unified Korea in A.D. 668, a time of cultural flowering.

EKTACHROME (LEFT) BY JOHN LAUNOIS, BLACK S[illegible]KTACHRO[illegible]

**Rock-hewn followers of the Buddha** parade in a mountain grotto, Sukkulam, near Kyongju. To the right of candlesticks capped with lotus-blossom shades, a rounded stone forms the

one of our patrols less than a mile from the conference room? Three of our men were killed and two were wounded."

### Horror Shatters an Easter Sunday

Such ambushes are not uncommon in this little-reported war; more than a hundred defenders, including 21 Americans, had been killed in the 12 months prior to my visit. I talked with Specialist 4C Leroy R. Jacks, one of only two survivors of a North Korean ambush (page 331). Jacks is a U. S. soldier whose duty was to stand guard in the Joint Security Area that surrounds the Panmunjom truce camp.

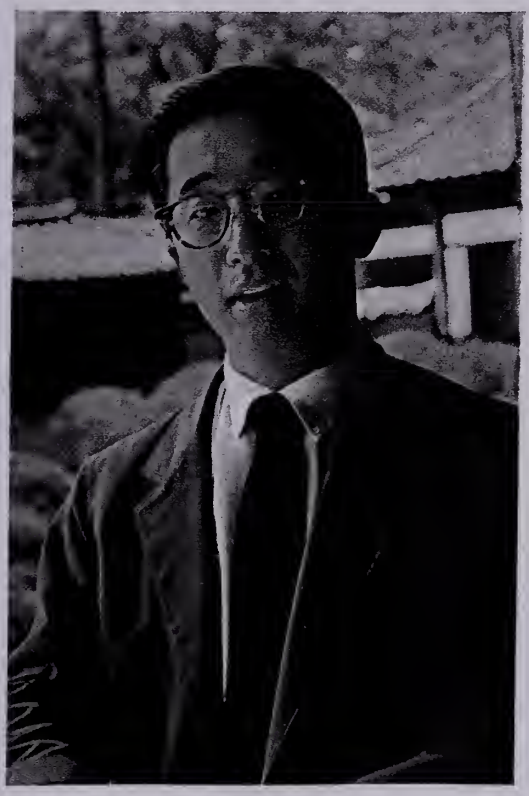
"I had written my mother that 'it's been too quiet here lately,' just the day before," he said. "It was last Easter Sunday, about eleven at night. We were in a 3/4-ton truck, six of us, going north in the DMZ to our guard post in the Joint Security Area.

"We were driving along, singing country music, when a grenade hit the right front wheel of the truck and stopped us. Then I saw muzzle flashes from both sides of the road—maybe 10 men in three firing positions just 10 to 20 feet ahead of us. I was hit in the leg and got down and doubled up on the floor of the truck.

"Sergeant Anderson [James L. Anderson of Camp Springs, Maryland] started to get out of the truck, yelling, 'O.K., you got us, we surrender.' There was a burst of automatic weapons fire, and he fell dead on top of me. Then they came up to the truck and started rummaging around. I felt somebody jerk the .45 pistol from my holster. I was trying to freeze, but I was so scared my left leg kept fluttering."

The ambush party then laced the back of the truck with fire. At that point a jeepload of soldiers also going to the guard post came along, and this evidently saved Jacks' life. The Communist troops melted away. A few minutes later a rescue group arrived and carried Jacks and a second wounded man to a hospital. Four of the six were dead.

To get the feel of the DMZ, I arranged to spend a night at one of the U.N. guard posts.



4N LAUNOIS, BLACK STA EKTACHROME (ABOVE) AND KODACHROME BY HOWARD SOCHUREK © N.G.S.

knee of a giant seated Buddha. Capital of the Silla kingdom for nearly a thousand years, Kyongju abounds with temples and tombs, such as that which yielded the crown at left.

**Descendant of kings,** Yi Kyu preserves the name of the Yi dynasty, which ruled from 1392 until 1910. The MIT graduate works for preservation of Korean antiquities.

Observation Post Dort lies at the head of a beautiful emerald valley. Through such north-south passageways came the Communist invaders in 1950, as had Mongols in their 13th-century conquest of Korea.

Dort sits on a high chocolate-drop hill, surrounded by mine fields and barbed wire. During the Korean War, Chinese and U.N. artillery shaved 20 feet off its top by incessant bombardment.

First Lt. Melvin Banks, aged 32, of Eunice, Louisiana, greeted me in his octagonal command bunker. Almost completely underground, the bunker is the nerve center of the defensive position. From it, trenches run to four smaller satellite bunkers containing electronic detection equipment, searchlights, and night viewing devices.

### "Pyongyang Polly" Offers Rewards

Lieutenant Banks was joined at dusk by his company commander, who came to brief the patrol going out for the night. He was 1st Lt. (now Capt.) Jasper J. Sanger, 29 years old, of Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

"There are a lot of people getting killed up here," Sanger said. "If you get into a fire fight here, you are at war whether it's called that or not. It's like a forgotten world. The men here work harder than they do anywhere else I've been, but who knows it?"

Lieutenant Banks and his patrol moved out. I settled down in the command bunker with 1st Lt. Gay Wright of Denver, Colorado, 23, the artillery forward observer. I slept on the dirt floor surrounded by canisters of flares and boxes of hand grenades.

At midnight, we were all awakened by "Pyongyang Polly." Her voice was coming from Communist loudspeakers about a mile away on the Communist side of the Demilitarized Zone.

Polly introduced a man she said was operations officer of the captured U.S.S. *Pueblo*. In a faltering, unnatural voice he began: "I am

KODACHROMES BY HOWARD SOCHUREK © N.G.S.

**Victim of Communist ambush,** U. S. Army Specialist 4C Leroy R. Jacks survived a night attack in the DMZ that killed four buddies. Shot in the leg, he played dead as assailants grabbed his pistol and fled.

**Would-be assassin,** North Korean Kim Shin Jo and 30 others crossed into the South last year on orders to behead President Park. Twenty-eight were killed and two escaped; Kim was captured and turned informant.

**Like a dam against the flood,** sandbags rim trenches at Observation Post Dort, a U. S. bunker at the Demilitarized Zone separating the two parts of Korea. American GI's defend 18½ miles of the 151-mile-long buffer, still the scene of bloody clashes. Here troops eye North Korean propaganda loudspeakers with prismatic binoculars, whose upturned tubes make possible reconnaissance from behind the trench walls.

Swaggerin
Korean sec
to posts at
DMZ, whe
tives and N
face to face
Sochurek, a
shooting wa
a place of
fused for ex



Profile of a
of the Arm
thur leads h
1950 amphi
chon. The
ture decora
foot-high st
erected by
Inchon hil
scene of his

Swaggering grimly, North Korean security guards march to posts at Panmunjom in the DMZ, where U.N. representatives and North Koreans meet face to face (page 334). Author Sochurek, a veteran reporter of shooting wars, found the DMZ a place of chilling hostility, fused for explosion.

**Profile of a liberator:** General of the Army Douglas MacArthur leads his staff ashore in the 1950 amphibious invasion at Inchon. The bronze-relief sculpture decorates the base of a 30-foot-high statue of MacArthur erected by the Koreans on an Inchon hill overlooking the scene of his daring flank assault.

KODACHROME (TOP LEFT) AND EKTACHROMES © N.G.S.

**Wooden guns and iron** will mark a militia drill at Yangsong. The company belongs to a $2\frac{1}{2}$-million-member South Korean home guard that sprang to life early last year after the North Korean assassination attempt on President Park and the seizure of the U. S. electronic intelligence vessel *Pueblo*.

ashamed of my criminal acts against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I am praying for the People's Republic of Korea to forgive us so we can get home."

His statement was followed by a kind of Korean death-march dirge that really shook me up. Using a combination of drums and trombones, it had a foreboding, eerie quality. Then Polly reverted to Korean. We had a Korean outpost on our right flank.

A Korean interpreter was with us, and he translated: "She say you come north and you get too good job, too much pay. Get nice girls. Bring machine gun and you get paid 1,000 won, North Korean money [$400]. Bring radio get 500 won, helicopter 10,000 won."

The propaganda program ended, and a machine gun fired a blast somewhere on the line. I heard small-arms fire in return. Then quiet. Far in the distance I heard the curious doglike bark of a musk deer.

When I arose at first light, about 5:30 a.m., I found Lieutenant Banks and his patrol coming back through our perimeter. After breakfasting on canned cold ham and lima beans, they bedded down. A jeep mounted with a machine gun came for me, and I headed back to the world.




**Cold-war combatants man the front line**—the Panmunjom truce table in the DMZ. A ribbon, visible between the flags of North Korea (foreground) and the United Nations, marks the precise boundary dividing North and South. At right sits the chief U.N. representative, Maj. Gen. Gilbert H. Woodward of the U. S. Army, flanked by a South Korean general (background) and a British brigadier. Across from General Woodward sits North Korea's negotiator, Maj. Gen. Pak Chung Kuk. Charts behind him allege truce violations. It was over this table, just before last Christmas, that General Woodward successfully completed negotiations for the release of the U.S.S. *Pueblo*'s 82 surviving crewmen, who had spent 11 months in North Korean hands.

**Kibitzers from Red China** observe each move of the unending truce talks. Serious and unsmiling, they sit behind the North Korean negotiators.

**Those who died for freedom** lie in the United Nations Memorial Cemetery at Pusan; stones in the foreground mark the graves of Turkish fighters, famous for their bravery. The field, holding the remains of 2,266 men, symbolizes the war's grim toll of 175,887 U.N. battle casualties, four-fifths of them South Korean. The large marker honors troops of the British Commonwealth.


IC SOCIETY

etween
th and
anked
North
table,
of the

serve
talks.
t be-
ators.

lie in
eme-
ound
nters,
field,
men,
l of
four-
arge
itish

**A mighty flood swept these rocks downstream** to Todamsambong, or so goes an ancient legend about the Han River. Beyond a sculling boatman, a pavilion offers rest and vistas to summer visitors who flock to the Han's sandy

In Seoul I had a long-awaited date with President Park. At noon on a humid summer day, with the temperature nudging 90°, I rode alone in the back seat of an official car to a gatehouse where armed guards were searching some tradespeople before admitting them. After signing a form, I was taken by a military escort to a large building. There Cho Sang Ho, the protocol secretary, greeted me.

It was only a short distance to the Blue House, named for the color of its roof tiles, but we drove to it in a small Korean-built car which stopped, after a moment, before a heavy iron gate set in a high wall. Again I was under the questioning eyes of security guards in blue uniforms. Then a hand offered a small plastic badge; I pinned it to my suit coat. The gate rolled back and we drove through.

Inside the residence Mr. Cho escorted me to a small waiting room. He disappeared, and I heard someone practicing the piano on the floor above. It was a strange, tranquil sound. I learned later it was the President's daughter, Keun Hye, aged 16.

In a moment I was shaking the hand—and contending with the viselike grip—of Presi-

KODACHROME BY H. EDWARD KIM, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF © N.G.S.

banks. Meandering across the nation, the river was crossed and recrossed by opposing armies in the seesaw battles of the Korean War. Today five hydroelectric dams stairstep its headwaters, and two more are under construction.

dent Park. His brown eyes were intense and searching. They fell upon my four cameras.

"What's that ancient camera you are carrying?" he asked.

"Mr. President," I answered, "that is a Leica I used in the parajump at Sukchon, north of Pyongyang, in 1950."

President Park took the camera and examined it carefully. "That must be of great sentimental value," he said. "You must leave it as your family's treasure."

As I photographed the President (page 304), he seized and would not relinquish the initiative in the conversation. He kept up a steady drumbeat of questions, toying with a magnifying glass as he talked.

"How do you feel about Korea after an absence of 18 years?" he asked.

I answered, "It's like a new country."

"Have you visited the DMZ here?" he asked. I said yes, and he quickly followed: "Did you visit Korean or U. S. troops?"

"Both," I responded.

The Prime Minister, Chung Il Kwon, stopped by. While they chatted briefly I looked through a window into the garden

where two helicopters stand by on 24-hour alert. Double doors from the office opened on a sun-filled room, its tables piled high with engineering blueprints and renderings of bridges, highways, and factories.

President Park came into office after Syngman Rhee resigned in 1960, and after a military coup ousted the government that followed. A leader in the coup, Major General Park later resigned from the military and won national elections in 1963 and 1967. Another election is due in 1971.

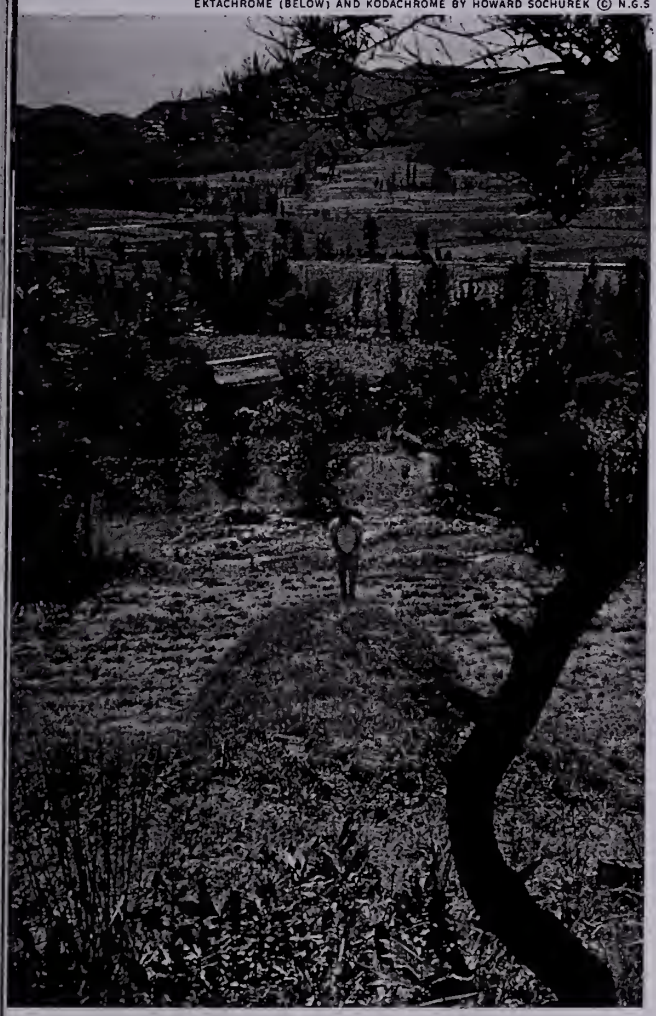
Now my time had expired. The President asked, "Did you make any pictures of me with that camera—the one you jumped into North Korea with?" I assured him that I had.

He waved in parting. "Have a good trip."

I left realizing that the President had been interviewing me, and not the other way around.

Though Korea is fast changing in the cities, there is a vast area that remains relatively unchanged. It is rural Korea and the village.

EKTACHROME (BELOW) AND KODACHROME BY HOWARD SOCHUREK © N.G.S



One day I asked my guide, Kim, "Do you still have a village you consider home?"

"Of course," he replied. "Every Korean family has a traditional village. Most of my relatives are still there." After some persuasion, he consented to a visit.

Nogong-ni, which means "old valley village," lies about fifty miles southeast of Seoul in country typical of Korea: high hills, mountains, and fertile rice-growing valleys.

### Security Drawn From Family Ties

"The family is very important to us here," Kim said as we drove over country roads to Nogong-ni. "It gives us security. You are not facing the world alone; you are also responsible for other people. Knowing the honor of the family is involved, you are a lot more careful of what you do."

I learned that Kim's father, a provincial official, had died when his son was 14. Since Kim was the eldest of four sons, he inherited the responsibility of family support. Kim moved to Nogong-ni, his father's birthplace. There he farmed 3,000 pyong of rice land, about 2½ acres.

Kim continued: "There are many similarities between Koreans and Americans, but more things that are different. The main difference is ego. We seldom say 'I,' or propel ourselves to the front. You say 'my family' or 'my wife.' We say 'our wife, our family.' We are contemplative and illogical and fatalistic."

That was enough to ponder for the rest of the drive.

Late in the afternoon we arrived at Nogong-ni and went to the house of Kim's cousin, a young man named Woo Sik. The thatch-roofed, mud-plastered house was in the traditional L-shape (opposite). It had three bedrooms, a kitchen, and a large porch whose floor, elevated about two feet from the ground, was made of a beautifully polished hardwood (page 340).

**Approaching a grassy burial mound,** Kim Kwang Sik, the author's interpreter, pays respect to a departed uncle. Koreans often set aside several days a year for showing devotion to their ancestors.

**Snuggling roof to roof,** houses of rice straw and dried mud crowd Kim's village of Nogong-ni. Here, as a guest of the interpreter's cousin, Kim Woo Sik, the author found hospitality that made the days of his visit "among the most enjoyable I have spent anywhere."

EKTACHROME (ABOVE) AND KODACHROME © N.G.S.

**Separate tables:** Old customs persist in the home of Kim Woo Sik, where a farm laborer eats apart from Woo Sik's mother, wife, and daughters. The head of the household dined earlier and also alone. Flowers decorate the austerely furnished room.

**Bearing her share of family burdens,** grandmother Hwang Yung Sung combines baby-sitting with cooking noodle soup—the usual menu for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. By managing the home, she frees her son's wife to work the fields. Family well stands beside a vine-covered wall.

Furniture in the Korean house is at a minimum. In the room turned over to Kim and me, only a huge cabinet stood against the wall. It contained quilts, blankets, and a thin mattress for sleeping on the floor.

I left the Kim cousins to catch up on the family news and wandered into the village. Red peppers were drying everywhere, and children were running to gather them in for the night. I heard an odd sound—chuga, chuga, chuga, chug—and followed it to a thatch-roofed house. Inside was a Rube Goldberg contraption come to life—a single-cylinder gasoline engine driving a belt attached to an overhead shaft. The revolving shaft drove another belt attached to a set of wooden rollers. I watched a man putting flour and water into a bin, from which the dough oozed through the rollers, emerging in thin sheets. The sheets passed over a rack of fixed knives that cut them into strips to be hung up on a clothesline to dry in the sun. Noodles!

The machine had been in the village so long that no one could remember what genius invented it, but it provided a good income for the noodle-making family that inherited it.

I walked on to a house where women were sorting tobacco leaves. Beyond, a farmer was spreading night soil on his cabbage patch. It was wonderfully peaceful and quiet and basic.

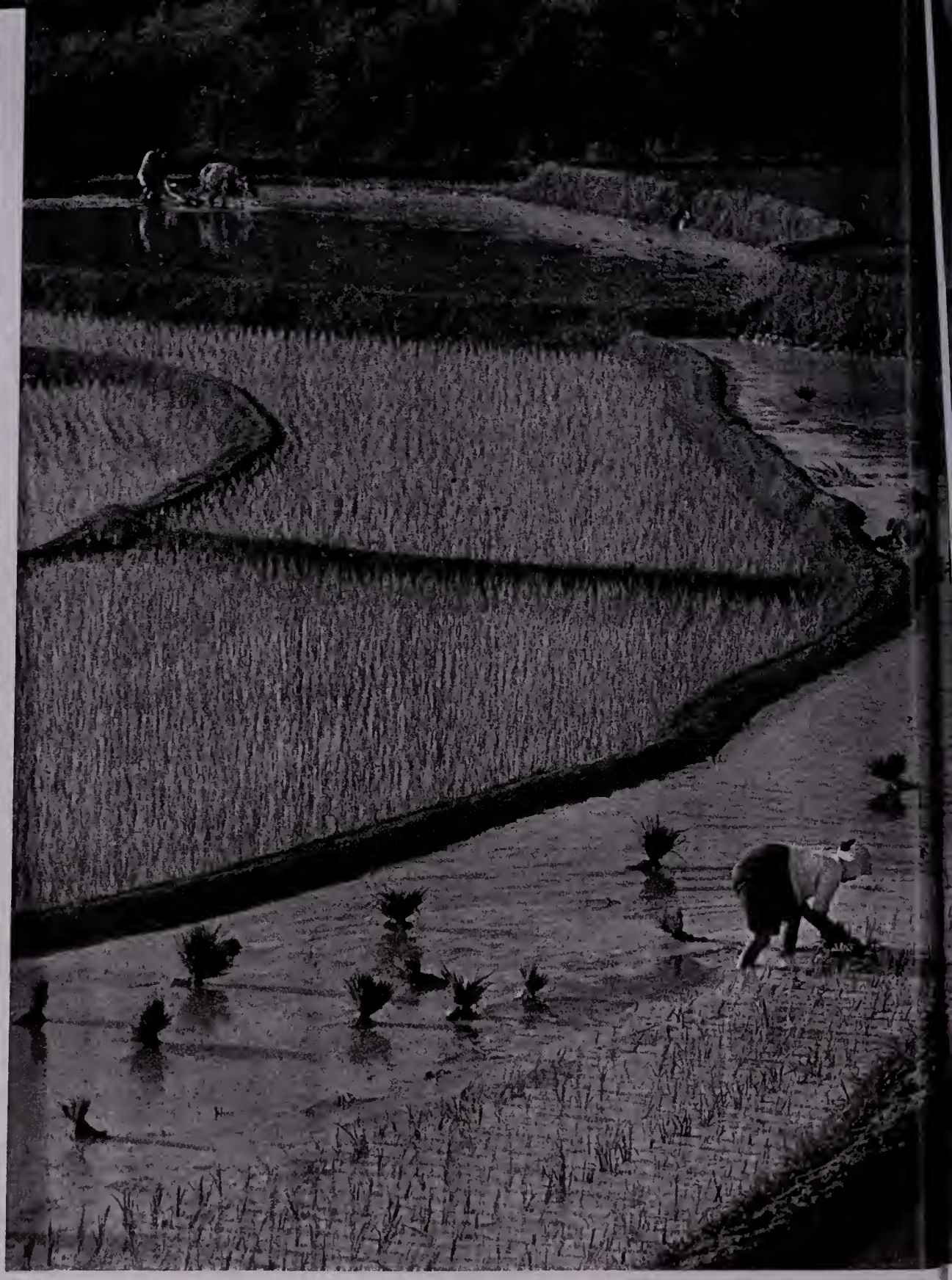
### Interest High, Taxes Low

Kim came to fetch me. He wanted me to meet his aunt, Jang Ju, aged 65. Over a bowl of delicious noodle soup, Aunt Jang Ju talked about her youngest son. Her biggest problem of the moment was to find, through a marriage broker, a suitable wife for him. At one point, in jest, she asked me if I knew of any suitable young ladies.

I asked, "Will an American girl do?"

She answered, "Anyone, anyone," and laughed. "But quickly, quickly."

Woo Sik, our host, works 15 hours a day farming the 5,400 pyong (about 4½ acres) of land he inherited. Half of his fields are irrigated, half are dry. In addition to rice, he cultivates barley, beans, red peppers, cabbage, radishes, tomatoes, lettuce, and pumpkins. Woo Sik's one ox pulls a wooden plow that



**Like waves lapping a crescent beach,** paddy fields climb a slope near Kyongju. A father, mother, and son, their backs seemingly forever bent, transplant rice seedlings; a neighboring farmer plows with an ox. Mechanization comes slowly to the fields; two Koreans out

EKTACHROME BY HOWARD SOCHUREK © N.G.S.

her,
oor-
out

of every three still earn a living from the soil, usually on privately owned plots of two or three acres. But a government program of fertilizer manufacture has transformed the land's productivity, and a nation threatened by famine 20 years ago now can nearly feed itself.

has been in the family for at least 60 years.

"We live better now," Woo Sik remarked, "even though many of us are in debt here."

I learned that farmers traditionally borrow money to send their children to school. Interest rates are steep—6 percent a month on any amount up to 100,000 won ($370; one U. S. dollar is worth 270 South Korean won, as against 2½ North Korean won). If you borrow rice, interest runs 50 percent per year.

Taxes, however, are quite low. Woo Sik pays only 6,000 won (about $22) a year. His farm yields an annual profit of $300. The average per capita income in Korea is $143.

Like other farm villages, Nogong-ni is gradually losing population. A farm worker earns 40,000 won ($148) or 10 sacks of rice a year—about 1,500 pounds—in addition to food and shelter. In the city, he might make three times as much money.

But Kim Kwang Sik insisted that the villagers were better off than when he had lived there. Although they still had no electricity, or running water, or bathtubs, or tractors, and seldom ate meat, there were changes. The village had bus service. And now there were sewing machines and bicycles.

My days at Nogong-ni were among the most enjoyable I have ever spent anywhere. The discomfort of sleeping on the *ondol,* the heated, hard clay floor, was eclipsed by the hospitality of Kim's family. And my initial shock at a thick noodle soup for breakfast was softened by the kindness of one of Kim's cousins, who ran a mile to bring a single fresh egg for the *Migook* (American).

### Stone Temple Recalls Past Glory

One of the finest religious shrines in Korea, and a cultural treasure as well, is a granite cave temple dating from the Silla dynasty —Sukkulam on Toham San (mountain) near Kyongju (pages 328-9). Here sits a nine-foot stone Buddha carved in A.D. 752. It is a masterpiece unsurpassed anywhere, to my mind, in Southeast Asia. On the walls are elegant relief carvings of Buddha's followers.

Nearby, Kim and I met and talked to two old men, No Ban Sik, 76, and Kim Hong Pil, 70. They, like us, had come to visit Kwae Nung, the tomb of a Silla king. They told me of some of the customs of their boyhood.

"The most dramatic change in my life," began Ban Sik, "is what has happened to women. When I was a boy, women were seldom permitted to come outside the house. If they did come out, they masked their faces. The only women we saw were the *kisaeng,* or art persons. The kisaeng were young entertainers skilled in music, conversation, and poetry [pages 324-5]."

As an aside, Kim said 72 distinct social classes were once listed in Korea. The king stood at the top. The six lowest classes were the kisaeng, servants, beggars, sorcerers, butchers, and, at the very bottom, actors.

### Old Men Thank America for Peace

Though both No Ban Sik and Kim Hong Pil spoke wisely and well, they had no formal education. Neither had ever been to Seoul. They would most probably die having spent their lives within a radius of 20 miles.

"Are things better for you now?" I asked.

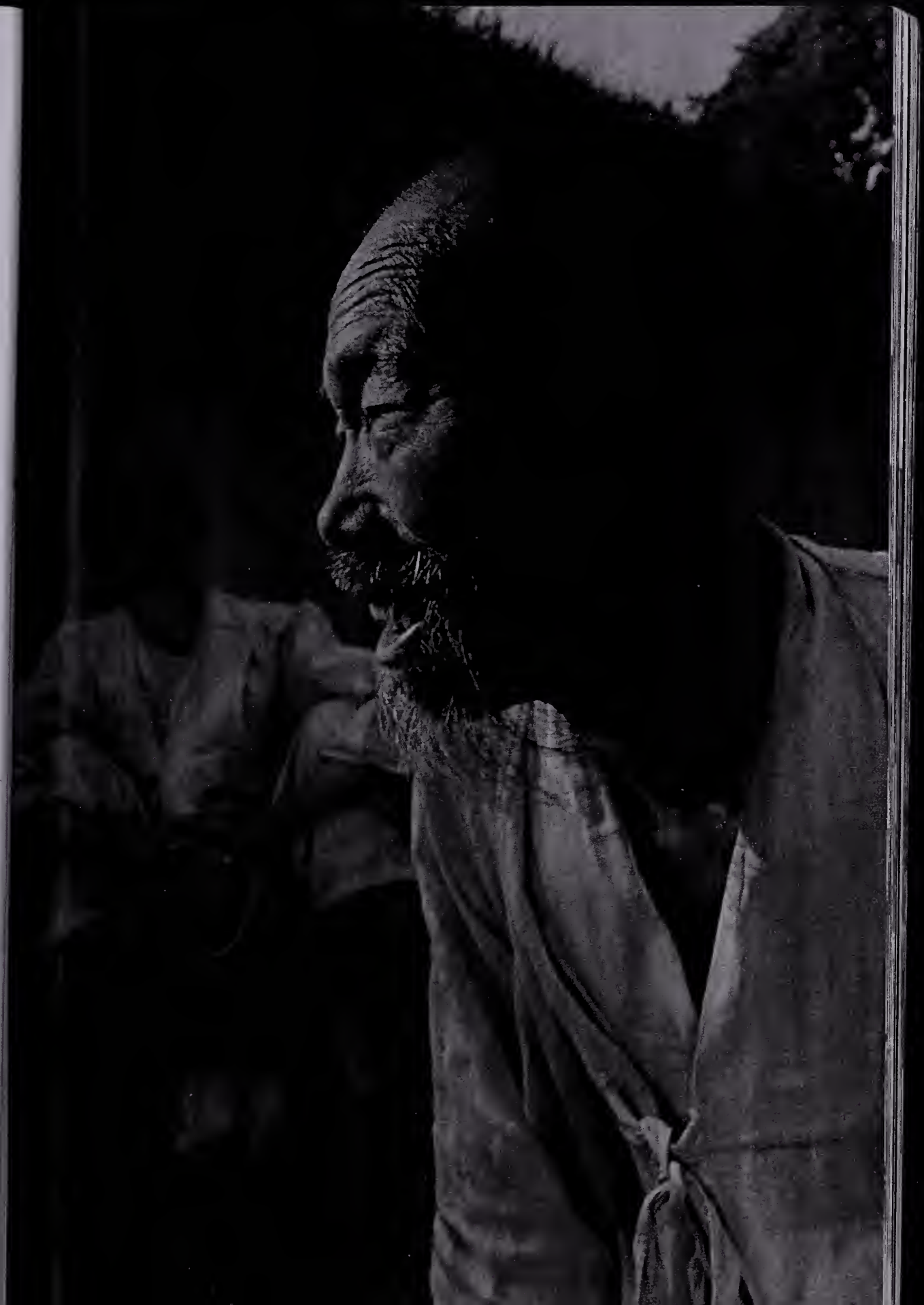
"Yes," answered Ban Sik. "We have smaller taxes, and when the crop is poor the government imports grain and distributes it to us. We have cloth to make clothes, and even ordinary people can buy rubber shoes. Before we had only shoes of rice straw."

Then quite spontaneously he remarked, "Americans have saved us from our hardships, from the Japanese who took our men to forced-labor camps, from the Communists who invaded us."

As No Ban Sik waved goodbye, he said, "I will be most thankful if you will use some of my story. The Americans have delivered us; tell them we know about it." He ambled off with his old friend and a grandchild who clung to his left hand.

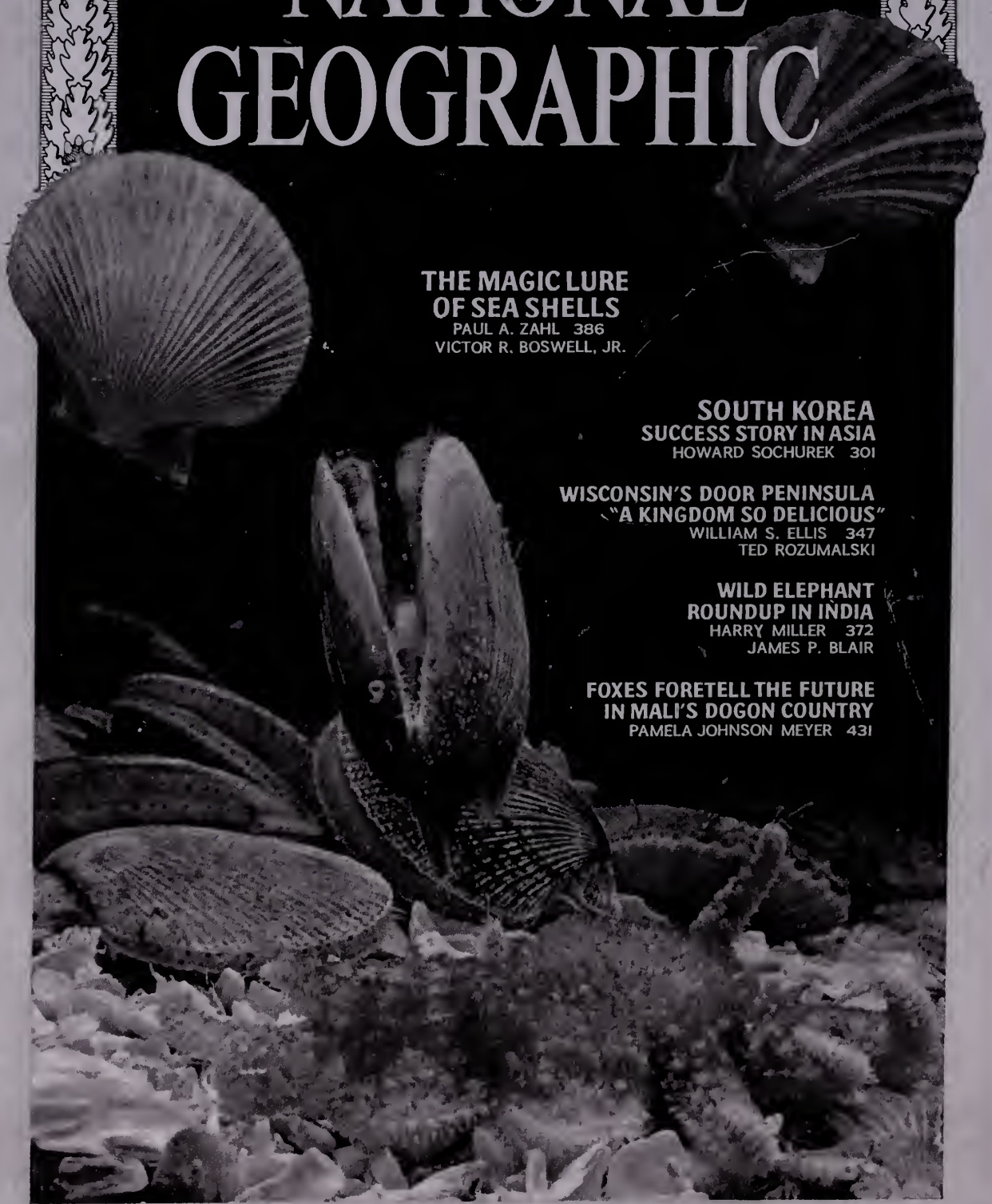
And now, as I prepared to leave Korea, I kept wondering how the sons of these old men of ancient Choson—the Land of Morning Calm—had managed to cope so well with the turmoil and promise of the 20th century. The answer for me came out of the conversation with No Ban Sik. At one point he had said, "Remember, this is not a place for ordinary men." THE END

**His wispy beard a badge of dignity,** 76-year-old No Ban Sik visits with another septuagenarian, Kim Hong Pil, at the tomb of a Silla king near Kyongju. Reminiscing about changes in his country during the three-quarters of a century he has seen, No Ban Sik spontaneously thanked the author for American help in freeing his country, first from the Japanese in World War II and later from Communist invaders.



VOL. 135, NO. 3 MARCH 1969

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC





OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY WASHINGTON, D.C.